

News Release



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Historic John Marsh Home to get Beams and Braces to Stabilize Deteriorating Structure

Braces, beams, buttresses, a good deal of shoring-up, and other vital engineering work, is on the way to help protect one of California's most remarkable historic structures, the John Marsh home near Brentwood. The home was built in 1856 and was considered then to be the finest ranch home in all of California, a home with seven gables and a unique observation tower more than three stories tall.

A contract has been awarded to City Building, Inc., of San Francisco, for the initial stabilization of the historic structure, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The project has been funded through a California Cultural and Historical Endowment (CCHE) grant of \$808,379 to the City of Brentwood in collaboration with California State Parks, which owns the property as part of the Cowell Ranch/John Marsh State Historic Park. The Endowment was established in 2003 by then-Governor Gray Davis, the funds coming from Proposition 40, the voter approved bond act of 2002. Additional grants are being sought by the John Marsh Historic Trust in support of the eventual restoration of this gothic revival house.

"We welcome this public/private partnership to save this significant piece of California history, said Ruth Coleman, director of California State Parks.

This work is in coordination with other phases of work that will ultimately lead to the rehabilitation of the John Marsh House for public use. This particular grant contract includes, among other things, work to anchor and brace perimeter walls, installation of beams and columns to support floor joists and roof framing, and design for a weather-tight exterior. This work is designed to provide for stabilization to prevent collapse, while also allowing for some selective demolition to provide for a more comprehensive condition assessment for future phases of work.

This initial stabilization phase is expected to begin in mid-March and last five months. It is not intended to create a fully finished building interior, accessible to the public. That will

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occur in future phases as additional funds become available through private and public sources.

“The City of Brentwood is excited to be a partner with State Parks and the Trust to assist with the funding in saving this truly remarkable house,” said Craig Bronzan, Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Brentwood. “This project is important not only for the citizens of Brentwood and the surrounding communities, but for all of California and we are proud to play our part”.

“This is long-sought, wonderful news that provides assurance that work to save the historic Marsh house is happening,” said Gene Metz of the John Marsh Historic Trust. “The Trust is actively seeking the means of extending this vital work and we are proud to be partners with Brentwood and California State Parks.”

This project is a collaborative partnership between California State Parks, the City of Brentwood Parks and Recreation Department and the John Marsh Historic Trust, in a joint planning and fund raising effort to stabilize and rehabilitate the John Marsh home.

John Marsh was the first American Citizen to settle in what today is Contra Costa County. He was a medical doctor and developed Rancho Los Meganos as a large cattle ranch. He lived on the property from 1837 to 1856. In September 1856, Marsh was murdered on his way to San Francisco by three vaqueros who had received payment for work done, but disputed the amount of compensation from Marsh.

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